

CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

APRIL 1985

Vol. 10 #3

Our 100th issue.

100

Owlet Nightjar p.4



Club members enjoying an outing to the Muckleford Forest, 1984

President: Mr John Dare

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NEW The club now has its own P.O. box. It is No. 324 Castlemaine
Meetings: Held on the second Friday of each month, except January
at the Castlemaine High School, Lawson Parade. (Up behind the hospital)
Meetings commence 8 p.m. Visitors are very welcome.

SUPERSTITIONS No 1.

Taken from our old English Ancestors whose folk magic must have played a large part in their daily lives. Of course a Castlemaine Field Naturalist would never believe in these omens, -- or would they? Some are nice but others scary.

SPIDERS : Nicer than they look and almost always bring good fortune. Friendly and must not be killed. A spider indoors means lots of happiness and if it falls on you better luck still. So, "If you wish to live and thrive, let a spider run alive".

RITA REMINISCES

Some memories of Club outings, by Rita Mills

Over the years with the Club I have enjoyed many outings. Always being in the company of people who enjoy the same interests helps add to that enjoyment, and being with people whose knowledge helps add to mine, and vice-versa adds to the pleasure, but there are some outstanding memories amongst those times.

One outing was to Glenluce, and, after driving through acres of Mat Pea and Mitchell Wattle and wandering around the bush at that spot, we turned back and went along the Wewak track toward Porcupine Ridge road, stopping on the way for afternoon tea in a pleasant wide gully. I wandered off down the gully and again heard the 'baa-ing' I'd heard earlier in the afternoon. It wasn't sheep in the bush as I'd thought earlier, but a Forrester doe telling the buck to 'get lost'. They spotted me and the whole mob moved off. Later I'd wandered off down to the end of the gully again, and this time heard a rather broken booming roar. This time it was the buck. Gordon Grant chipped me for taking rather a risk, but the whole mob had only moved off again, this time for good. A couple of people I've spoken to have heard this sound from the buck. but it seems I'm one of only few who have. I was told that this is where they get the name of "Boomer"

A very strenuous outing was to Barfold Gorge to see the organ pipe columns and waterfall - which we didn't reach because the river was just too high, though we walked to it along the top after a stiff climb out. It was there we saw the rare anchor plant and some lovely red gums. Sight of the day though was the strange cloud formations to the South-west. Little did we know we were watching the tornado that devastated so much of Sandon.

After the bushfires at the end of '78 we decided to go out to the Muckleford forest to see the extent of the damage, and to check on any regeneration. All the Sticky Boronia had gone, but a few ground orchids had struggled through, but it was all very sad, until we stopped just at the edge of the blackened area. I spotted a hollow in a tree, and as is my habit, focussed the

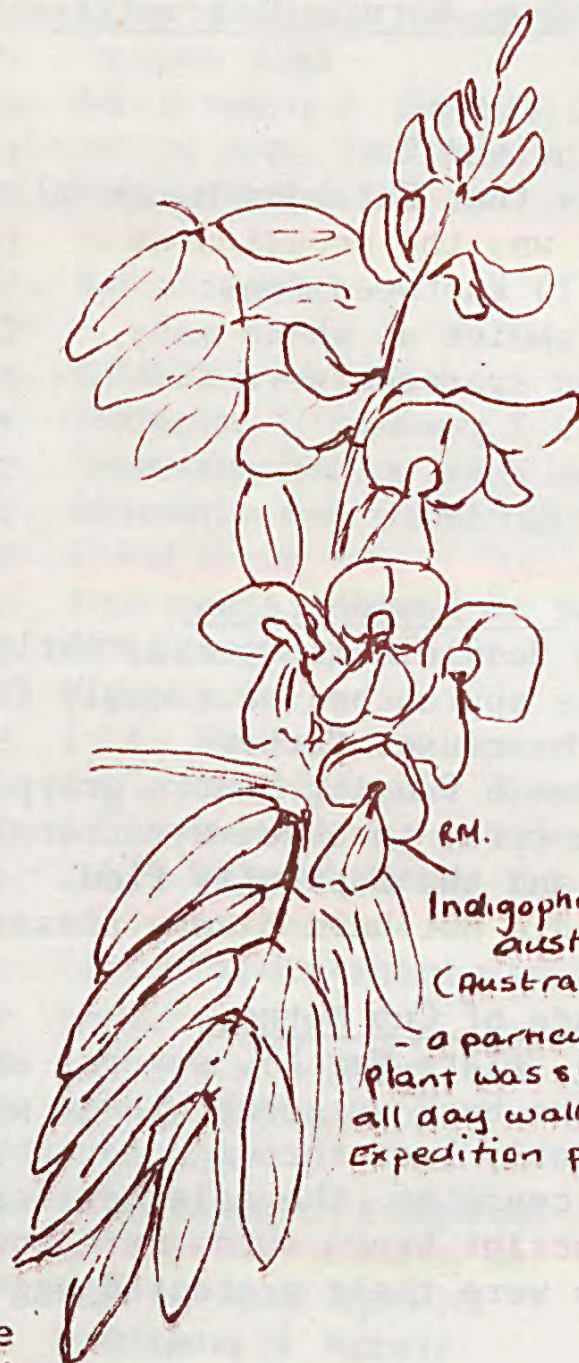


binoculars on the hole "just in case", and there was a dear little face watching me intently - a Sugar Glider. The group watched them for perhaps ten minutes as the family of three flitted up and down past the hole, or paused to look out, sometimes two at a time, to see what we were up to.

The all-day walks have always been a highlight. Often there hasn't been a lot out, and a couple of years have been dry, but the walk along the Maldon Railway line turned up some real treasures, especially as far as where the line leaves the Smith's Reef bush, and again almost into Castlemaine where we saw masses of White Helipterum growing on and beside the tracks.

The club has had a couple of campouts, one of which I "lead". There was another which I missed. The first one to the Grampians was in the first year of the club, and was very successful, with a number of adults and children attending. Best thing of the trip as far as the older children were concerned was the number of Shingle-backed lizards which were nursed.

The trip to Wychitella had a number of highlights, including me getting everyone rather lost in thick Melaleuca scrub when we looking for a Mallee Fowl nest. We got there later with the help of the chap who had drawn the map I had tried to follow! The flowers in the area were a delight, especially the Showy Phebalium, *P. obcordatum*, on the walking track at Wychitella and the wax (*Eriostemon difformis*) and hundreds of pink and blue *Caladenias*, (*C. carnea* and *coerulea*) out on the road to Nine Mile, where we also had a good look at an *Echidna*.



R.M.

Indigophera australis.
(Austral Indigo)

- a particularly Showy plant was seen on the all day walk to Expedition pass.

On the way home on the Monday via Melville Caves, only the Harrises and ourselves were left of the party to see a flock of nine young Grass Whistle-ducks in the middle of the road. We sat there in the two cars, side by side in the road! Just as well there was no traffic and watched them preening and stretching for a good five minutes, while the parents zoomed across the road a good hundred yards away, obviously rather anxious.

There have been lots of other highlights, like outings to the Engine Dam (now dry), with microscopes and dipnets, finding all sorts of plants that haven't appeared for years where the pine plantation has been cut out, watching an Owllet Nightjar while it stared at us, and a Yellow-tufted Honeyeater gathering material for a nest. I could go on and on but I won't. I just hope I've whetted the appetites of those who haven't yet been out with us, or who haven't been for a while.

Some Nature Observations

by Barbara Maunder

Were you invited ?

Did you know that Saturday March 30 at 12.30 p.m. was the occasion of the (annual ?) Knotweed feast held in Castlemaine at which many starlings and sparrows were greedy guests ?



Narrow escape of Lepidopteran

Rita M.

Noticing a Buddleia tip persistently fluttering we approached cautiously from some distance expecting a bird to be the cause. Rather? Instead it was a Praying Mantis grappling manfully (?) with a butterfly. Detaching the spray to observe matters more closely, the Mantis' grip was loosened and the butterfly fled. (Perhaps it did not have a very pleasing flavour. Ed)

Evidence of Cup Moths

This morning, (late March), several small brown mouldy patches were observed on the back verandah window panes. As children in the nearby lane had recently been throwing rotten apples about it was assumed that this was the cause of the splatterings. On closer inspection several stocky nondescript brown moths were found on the window ledges and the furry patches were their protected egg clusters.

ANTHROPOLOGY

Aboriginal history unearthed 1
 Little River Bora Ground ab 71

ASTRONOMY

Eclipse of sun ep 7,8
 Planets through binoculars ep 11

BIRDS

Atlas of australian birds 30,88
 Bells Swamp - common birds ep 42
 Bird banding in West Australia tc 95
 Bird observations at Walkerville gb 59
 Bird Observers Club 31
 Bird watching on the Bellarine sb 92
 Birding at home and interstate rm 98
 Birds at the golf course in August sb 84
 Birds in the drought Wp 77
 Birds in the garden this month gb 90
 Birds of Mosquito Flat rm 64
 Birds of prey Dw 75
 Birds of the arid regions ab,82-83
 Black-chinned honeyeaters Wp 71
 Blue-faced honeyeater at golf links gb 63
 Common garden birds of Victoria 48
 Drought visitors at Palmers Wp 79
 Feeding and attracting native birds tc 61,62
 Grey fantail rw 23
 Grey-backed silvereye rw 5
 Indian mynahs near Castlemaine gb 50
 Indian turtle doves at Castlemaine ep 50
 Let's talk magpies 17
 Luxurious hide rm 76
 Mallee fowl rm,tc 65,71
 Mystery bird gb 58
 Night vision of owls 46
 Problem of bird identification gb 56
 Red wattle bird rm,tc 13,43
 Rufous whistler rw 10
 Swimming with grebes gs 66
 The language of birds wl 58
 Thornbills gb 90
 What I have observed on my block ew 71
 White-plumed honeyeater rw 3
 Yellow-tailed thornbill rw 17
 Yellow-tailed thornbill rw 17

BIRD LISTS

Mt. Alexander jb 15
 Barkers creek bird records pg/mw 11
 Barkers creek lg,gb, Wp,40,56,80
 Bells Swamp ep,sb 2,74
 Bendigo sewerage ponds sb 77
 Bird sightings for October 74
 Campbells Creek tc 90
 Castlemaine golf course rr,sb,gb 36,52,56
 Dalyenong sb 74
 Dargile Forest sb 40
 Emberton forest ep 59
 Expedition Pass gb 56
 Guildford rr 36
 Kaliana -,bs 12,34
 Kaweka rw 36
 Lyal Glen gb 75
 Maldon- Castlemaine railway ramble sb 42
 Porcupine Ridge jb 6
 Rubbish dumping at Campbells Ck. ep 27
 Settling ponds, Castlemaine rw,gb 36,56
 Vaughan Springs rr 36
 Welshmans Reef gb 78
 Wychitella forest rm 39

CONSERVATION

Castlemaine City planning 34
 Concern expressed over mining laws 65
 Conservation means exploitation 22
 Control burning ep 38
 Drain eyesore to become creek gb 47
 Fire prevention guidelines 80
 Highway parks 77
 L C C - North Central Area ep 29,31,48
 L C C recommendations for Alps ep 24,37
 L C C recommendations for Melbourne ep 11
 L C C- Recommendations to rb 54
 L C C- Recommendations for N E vic ep 13
 Loddon- Campaspe regional planning 72
 Ringpull cans tc 42
 Roadside link in gliders' life 34
 Save our bushland seminar fm 31
 Street trees ep,jn 25,29
 Taradale bush-what's happening? tc 49
 Test your skill-an ecology quiz jn 32
 Value of remnant vegetation 61
 Woodchipping in Victoria rm 57

ECOLOGY

Attracting native birds	gs 14
Basalt	ep 1
Campbells Creek frost report	tc 75
Control burning at Mt Alexander	ep 38
Drought & frost- Barker Ck plants	91
Drought affected plants (list)	ep 78
Drought report	76
Drought-post drought at Barkers Ck.	lg 81
Effects of a dry summer	cs 22
Effects of frost and drought	jn 74
Feral cats	ep,tc 41
Forest-pine or native?	fm 2
Frost damage	rm 73,75
How to find evidence of animals	rm 67
Mistletoe and Mistletoe birds	gs 10
Pines to combat drought at Harcourt	45
Road victims	rm 76
Skinks,slaters and earwigs	ep 13
Unusual patch of Chocolate lily	ft 5
Victorian forests and trees	fb 38
Wallaby tucker	Wp 60

EXCURSIONS

Bambra campout	ep 61
Barfold gorge	ep 8
Bells Swamp	ep,sb 2,74
Black Hill, Kyneton	ep 14
Brisbane Ranges campout	bs 19
Chewton reservoir	ep 51
Creswick campout	fm,ep 23,74
Dargile forest	ep,sb 36,39
Donald campout	fm 63
Emberton forest	ep 59
Eppalock	rm 81
Eucalypt tour	ep 91
Excursion etiquette	gb 47
Expedition pass walk	gb 62
Firth Park	rm 70
Franklin gorge	86
Geology tour	ep 99
Grampians campout	lb,ep 19,36
Guildford - Porcupine Ridge	ep 5
Kalimna North	ep 29
Laancoorie	ep 57
Lyal Glen	gb 75
Maryborough campout	ep 53

Mineral springs excursion report	ep 4
Mineral springs survey	gb 24
Mt Franklin to Guildford	ep 73
Muckleford - Maldon -illustrated	gs 7
Muckleford forest	ep 58
Muckleford Gorge	ep 27
Ocean Grove	ep,cs 16,19
Places to visit in Castlemaine district	ep 55
Pond life excursion report	gb 22
Port Campbell campout	fm 46
Redesdale - B O C outing	sb 63
Ridge road excursion photos	ep 42
Rise and shine, Franklinford	gb 97
Taradale to Fryerstown	ep 29
Trans- Loddon trek	sb 94
Unknown Miners Grave Gully	rm 6
Vaughan district - walk	ep 13
Walk through the pine forest	rm 59
Werribee - R A O U excursion	sb 93
Wood-wood campout	ep 50
Wychitella forest	rm 39

GEOLOGY

Anticline in Kalimna Park	ep 14
Barfold gorge	ep 8
Basalt capping at Joyces Creek	ep 73
Big Hill, Calder highway	ep 76,80
Bull Street anticline	ep 74
Castlemaine syncline (Railway av.)	gb 96
Cobaw granodiorite	Jb 27
Geology tour	ep 99
Graptolites	dw/mv 66
Irishtown	ep 81
Mineral springs survey	gb 24
Mineral springs	ja 2
Mines of Creswick	gb 90
Muckleford fault	ep 26
New road cuttings, Castlemaine Nth	ep 42
Rivers,creeks and man	ep 18

HISTORICAL

Brief history - Castlemaine F N C	55
Dicrastalis dorani	rb 37
Dying out of the native forest	rb 59
Emeu at Faraday	rb 34
English thrush at Mt Alexander	rb,16,48
First blackbird at Melb gardens	rb 13

Giant centipede	rb 32
Koala at Wattle Flat	rb 52
Large emu at Sawpit Creek	rb 53
Nardoo	rb 38
Native bear at Mt Alexander	rb 46
Native cat at Guildford	rb 72
Our first two years	ep 21
Platypus at Woods Point	rb 40
Rabbits for Campbells Creek	rb 12
Rivers, creeks and man	ep 18
Super spuds at Yapeen	rb 51
Sweet briars for sale	rb 10, 52

INVERTEBRATES

Army worms and thunderstorms	12
Case moths	aa 6
Flying poison pill	jc 10
Freshwater invertebrate key	32
Grasshoppers	tc 49
Pond life excursion report	gb 22
Pond life	21
Red-back spiders	tc 94
The world of spiders	60
War in the tree tops- Cup moths	74
Wasps	jw 68
Wattle goat-moth	sb 71
What caterpillar is this?	aa 10

MAPS

Barfold gorge	ep 8
Cobaw granodiorite	Jb 27
Emberton forest	ep 59
Geological features of Cast. district	w, ep 6
Mineral springs	ja 2
Muckleford fault	ep 26
Muckleford forest	ep 74
Serendip	ep 37
Wellsford forest	60
Werona	rn 72

ORCHIDS

Acianthus reniformis- Gnat orchid	rn 32
Caladenia caerulea - Blue caladenia	rn 8
Caladenia clavigera- Clubbed spider orch.	rn 43
Caladenia cucullata- Hooded caladenia	rn 19
Caladenia dilatata - Greencomb spider o.	rn 9
Caladenia patersonii - Common spider o.	rn 17

Caleana major- Flying duck orchid	rn 44
Corybas diemenicus- Slaty helmet orchid	rn 34
Dipodium punctatum - Hyacinth orchid	rn 11
Diuris maculata - Leopard orchid	rn 16
Diuris sulphurea- Tiger orchid	rn 40
Eriochilus cucullatus - Parsons bands	rn 10
Microtis biloba - Onion orchid	Fa 10
Microtis parviflora (Onion orchid)	rn 7
Mystery greenhood (Pterostylis sp)	rn 27
Orchid books	Fa 15
Orchids of Castlemaine area	ft 6
Orchids-friends and enemies	Fa 15
Orthoceras strictum- Horned orchid	rn 12
Pterostylis alata- Striped greenhood	rn 38
Pterostylis barbata- Beard greenhood	rn 23
Pterostylis curta- Blunt greenhood	rn 35
Pterostylis mutica- Midget greenhood	rn 31
Pterostylis nutans- Nodding greenhood	rn 36
Pterostylis robusta Sharp-leaf greenhood	rn 5
Pterostylis nana- Dwarf greenhood	rn 22
Spiranthes sinensis- Ladies tresses	rn 21
Thelymitra decora- Spotted sun-orchid	ep 85
Thelymitra ixioides - Spotted sun-orchid	rn 65
Thelymitra macmillanii- Crimson sun-o.	rn 13
Thelymitra megalyptra- Scented sun-o.	rn 64

PLANTS

Acacia difformis-a new wattle	ep 14
Acacia genistifolia	gs 3
Albino Early Nancy	aa 17
Alligator weed - weeds of waterways	tc 75
Ameyma quandong- Grey mistletoe	ep 4
Anyema preissii Wiry mistletoe	ep 5
Angophora floribunda	ep 1
Banksias of the east coast	tc 79, 80
Basket fungus	ep 22
Blue pincushions	rn 86
Boneseed	sb 94
Boronia at Muckleford	rn 84
Calocephalus citreus- Lemon beauty heads	ep 10
Cassinia arcuata- Coffee bush	ep 2
Castlemaine eucalypts	ep 25
Castlemaine top forty (plants)	ep 76
Common correa - Correa reflexa	rn 59
Common mistletoes	ep 12
Control of waterweeds	tc 76
Cranberry heath	rn 46
Cumbungi (Typha)	ep 21

Curved rice-flower - <i>Pimelea curviflora</i>	rm 97
Diminutive daisies of <i>Kalimna</i>	ep 41
Diminutive rushes and sedges	ep 85
Double wax	72
Duckweeds	ep 99
Dusty miller - <i>Spiridium parvifolium</i>	rm 60
Eucalyptus ovata - Swamp gum	ep 14,66
Eucalyptus albens- White box	ep 13
Flower fungus	rm 47
Freshwater red algae	gb 65
Garden and lawn weeds	ep 20
Gorse bitter pea - <i>Daviesia ulicifolia</i>	rm 56
Grevillea glabella-new record	ep 53
Grevillea sp at Harcourt	rm 48
Hairy bitter-cress- <i>Cardamine hirsuta</i>	ep 51
Heath family	ep 51
Hybrid eucalypt at Muckleford	ep 58
Hymenanthera dentata - Shrub violet	gs 5
Legend of the waratah	jc 15
Little strangler-vine	ep 70
Local correas	ep 15
Looking for the Mountain red-gum	ep 69
Magenta storksbill - <i>P. rodneyanum</i>	rm 89
Mealy stringybark at Taradale	ep 68
Muckleford - Maldon -illustrated	gs 7
Narrow-leaf peppermint at Elphinstone	ep 67
Native conifers	tc 52
Native pansy - <i>Goodenia</i> sp.	rm 63
New names for plants	24
Patterson's Curse	aj 82
Plants of <i>Kalimna</i> Point	ep 4
Preserving basket fungi	24
<i>Pultenaea laxiflora</i> - Bush pea	ep 9
Rock isotome- <i>Isotoma axillaris</i>	rm 49
Rough mint-bush- <i>P. denticulata</i>	rm 52
Silky parrot pea- <i>Dillwynia sericea</i>	rm 53
<i>Smilax asparagus</i>	ep 73
Stinkwort - <i>Dittrichia graveolens</i>	ep 77
<i>Swainsona</i> -new record	rm 84
Tiny star - <i>Hypoxis hookeri</i>	ep 50
Tiny trigger plants-identification	ep 53
Water hyacinth	tc 72
Wattles of Castlemaine district	ep 28
White marianth - <i>R. procumbens</i>	rm 61
Why change the name?	ep 24

PLANT LISTS

Basalt	ep 1
Castlemaine computer plant list	ep 76
Chewton reservoir	ep 51
Dargile Forest	sb 40
Elphinstone - Monk - Castlemaine	ep 19
Guildford - Porcupine Ridge	ep 5
<i>Kalimna</i> -abbreviated	ep 33,55,73
<i>Kalimna</i> Point -old plant list	ep 4
Mt Tarrengower	-,ep 37,38
Orchids of Castlemaine area	ft 6
Sandon - Campbelltown	ep 47
Unknown Miners Grave Gully	rm 6
Wychitella forest	rm 39

VERTEBRATES

A garden visitor (Bluetongue)	97
African Nile Perch	aj 82
Australian lizards	tc 86
Blue-tongue lizards	de 67
Fishes of local streams & reservoirs	kc 18
Lizards	tc 85-87
Mammal survey	hp 15
Not so extinct dinosaurs	ep 15
Numbats	tc 64
Peculiar behaviour of skinks	gb 98
Pelorus jack	rb 58
Phascogales at Barkers Creek	!wp 44
Red kangaroo, an advanced mammal	24
Snakes alive-oh	13
Snakes	tc 81-83
Sugar glider at Lerderderg	ap 70
Sugar gliders at Campbells Creek	wp 37
Sugar gliders	rm 70
What animal is this?	rm 68
Wildlife Castlemaine	tc 71
Wombat survey	84
World's most poisonous snake	61

EDITORS

E. Perkins	1-43
G. Broadway	44-65
R. Mills	66-87
G. Broadway	87-

CONTRIBUTORS

GENERAL

Animal magnetism	60
Another record system for the club!	ep 57
Barkers Creek observations	Wp 89
Binoculars-which magnification?	ep 11
Books for basic reference library	ep 6
Camping at Mt Buffalo	rm 66
Cassette players for excursions	gb 58
Central Queensland national parks	tc 94
C F N C annual magazine	ep 9
Club emblem	17
Club herbarium	ep 68
Club records	ep,mw 8,49,79
Diary of a bird observer	gb 64
Gossamer	gb 90
Got a favourite tree?	70
Gould League	ep 15
Hattah	gb 65
Honour for foundation president	gb 65
In the garden this month	gb 98
Index (1-40)	ep 40
Index,1976	ep 9
Interesting areas in Loddon district	16
Irishtown	ep 81
Index (1-40)	ep 40
Kalimna Park Preservation Committee	ep 4
Kalimna Point walk	tc 90
Kaweka..its origin	55
Loddon/ Campaspe strategy plan	ep 9
Maryborough F. N. C.	ep 3
Month at Campbells Ck	tc 89-99
Observations corner-	gb 35-53
Parsonic perambulations	rm 73
Places to see in Castlemaine	ep 55,96
Plant propagation	90
Propagation of native plants	ep/gs 12
Reminiscence	ft 22
Simpson Desert	tc 56
Slides - which way up?	ep 3
Trees in Vic - a photographic competition	60
Trip to W Australia	tc 96
Victorian National Parks Assoc.	17
Wellsford forest	60
Western Queensland trip	tc 29

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ISSUE DATES

1976(from April)	1-9:	1977	10-20
1978	21-31:	1979	32-42
1980	43-53:	1981	54-64
1982	65-75:	1983	76-86
1984	87-97:	1985	98-

The Month at Campbells Creek

by Terry Collins

Preceding a slight weather change on Feb 22, a flock of about 50 Fork-tailed Swifts appeared above our area wheeling in crazy patterns for hours. They appeared daily until March 7th, when apparently they were gone on their migratory trek. Quite interesting to wonder how many Kms they must do each hour in their aerial displays.

Our Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes also disappeared about mid-March, and according to my bird chart will return 10-14 Sept. Accidentally knocked a parrot nesting box and out came a lovely Sugar Glider; probably they have taken over all the other hollows. During the hot spell we were visited by dozens of various small birds between 5-6 p.m. flying in from the West straight to our bird bath. A quick drink and then off again. A first to our garden was a Striated Thornbill. Just two or three at the bird bath. For years I have tried to track down a bird with a monotonous call. Never a sight, always keeping just so far ahead in the trees. Finally I have up in disgust but with the sprinkler going under a low spreading Claret Ash and one hot day while watching all the birds hopping into the spray I heard the call up in the top canopy. Then staying hidden, this little bird kept calling and then hopped right down still calling into the spray. Mystery solved - a Spotted Pardelote.

Our Bronze-wing Pigeons now eat small amounts of Parrot seed from a tray and are nesting. One pair have a nest about 25 feet up in a fork of a Gum Tree. How they manage to sit on the few sticks which they call a nest is a wonder. Another pair nested low down in a Cypress but I found the nest and broken eggs on the ground plus a few feathers. Probably a cat just missed Mother but smashed the nest.

No need to worry about the lizards. A very young Blue-tongue has arrived in the wooden steps going up to the shed. Comes out daily and we feed him every second day. One of biggest and fattest Shingle-back paid a visit to the garden so that means the three types are still around.

Plantwise, still nothing to report of note except a few Grevilleas are showing small buds and a Banksia has numerous candles nearing maturity. Good news for the Honey-eaters as we fill the bird bottle every second day. During a discussion last week somebody mentioned Sky-larks. Hve we any around this area? I rmemeber their beautiful song while hovering about 100 feet up. That is going back in time to the 1930's, around Sale and Rochester.

OUR ONE HUNDREDTH ISSUE

In our first issue in April 1976, it is recorded that it was decided to produce a news sheet on trial. Now here we are 99 issues later with the cost of membership having risen by \$1 to \$4 still trying to produce a news sheet every month. Unfortunately printing costs have not remained at the 1976 level of 4 cents, being now more like 20 cents per copy.

In a report on the first club outing, to Basalt, it was stated that the area would be well worth a return visit, in Spring. Perhaps it is time we considered making that return visit.

To mark the occasion of our 100th, Ern perkins has with the aid of his computer, prepared for us an index of our first 99 issues. I am sure that you too will be impressed as I was by the range of articles and the number of contributors we have had over the 9 years of publication. Many thanks to all those who have contributed, and to those who are about to

DO YOU WANT BACK ISSUES?

Possibly 4 or 5 club members have complete sets of the club newsletter, as has the TAFE library (Tech College, Lyttleton St). Issues still in print are

Numbers 40-100. All except 42,46,62. Only one copy of number 91 is left.

For the earlier issues, copies of the following are still available.

1,10,12,13,17,19,20,25,26,27,30,32,33,34,35,36,38.

If you need some of the out of print issues to complete your set, photocopying can be arranged.

The club does not have a set of its own magazine! Perhaps we should collect a set, and have the set bound.

More Superstitions

FERNS : Most ferns are associated with thunder and lightning and if hung around the house will protect it from storms and tempests. You must be careful not to burn a fern or uproot a clump or this could cause storms and heavy rain. In Ireland ferns are said to be flowerless because St Patrick put a curse on them.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. AGENDA

Friday 12 April. BIRDS. Speaker is Ellen McCulloch, from Bird Observers Club. 8 p.m. at High School, Room 309

Sat 13 April. YANDOIT Excursion to the Cox Property. Leader is Kaye Turner. Meet S.E.C. at 1.30 sharp..

Sun 14 April. GLENLUCE-TARILTA to see large reefs, with Maryborough F,N.C. Meet SEC, Mosyn St at 1.35 or Guildford Store at 2.00 p.m.

Sat/Sun 20-21 April. PRINCETON. Western Victoria F.N.C. Association Campout at 'Kangarooobie', Princeton. Excursions to Pt Campbell, Melba Gully and Glow Worms, Princeton Swamp etc. Brochure available.

Friday 10 May. DEVIL'S KITCHEN, By W. Day, Ballarat C.A.E. High School at 8 p.m.

Sat 11 May DEVIL'S KITCHEN, via Ballarat Leave 10 a.m. from SEC, Mostyn St.

Frid 14 June. MR ALLAN HARTUP will be guest speaker.

Sat 15 June. MELBOURNE ZOO All day bus trip.

Fri 22 July DR E. PETERS - POND LIFE

August. BENDIGO -W.V.F.N.C.A campout.

Sat 10 Aug. MELVILLE CAVES- all day

Fri 13 Sept WILDFLOWERS - tba.

Sat 14 Sept WILDFLOWER EXCURSION

Fri/Sat/Sun 13-15 October. COLAC - W.V.F.N.C.A. Campout.

Sun 20 Oct. BENDIGO WHIPSTICK - all day excursion with Maryborough F.N.C.

Sat 9 Nov. Excursion with Bird Observers Club..

Feb 1986. Bendigo Settling Ponds, with Maryborough F.N.C.

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